

### Houston West FGS



January 2021

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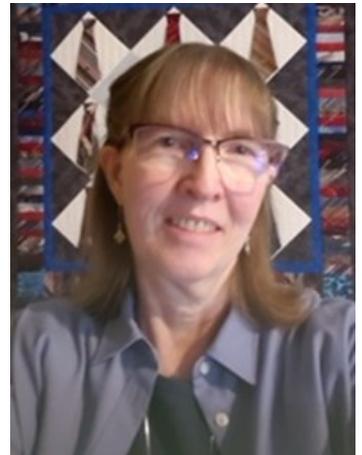
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#### Presenting Virtually!

Speaking at our January 14, 2021 presentation is member Jeanie Smith! Her presentation is entitled **"Organizing and Preserving Your Stuff."** At the 2019 Holiday Party, she shared some of her organization and preservation techniques and we all wanted to hear more. At our next meeting, she will be

sharing what she has learned. The basic steps are the same for most versions of organization, only the content of the filing system changes. Learn how to organize for easy access, to be more productive and to minimize repeat searches.

To attend, register at [www.houstonwestfamgen.org](http://www.houstonwestfamgen.org)



#### "Organizing Your Stuff" by Jeanie Smith ©

If you're like me you have boxes of documents where hand-written notes are mixed in with original documents. The best organizational system will be a little different for each individual, but the basics are

the same for everyone. You want everything to be easy to find and use in your research but also safely stored and expandable. If your system is not easy, you won't stick with it. Where

do you begin? This article will help prepare your documents for your chosen filing system.

*Cont. on page 3*





## *The President's Note....*

Greetings,

Yes, it is a new year! I trust you and your loved ones had a blessed, healthy, and joyous holiday season. Let's take the opportunity to be grateful for all the good things 2020 included and to plan how we want 2021 to evolve. What are you grateful for? Looking ahead, what do you hope 2021 includes to ensure it is a successful year in both your personal life and as a member of HWGS? Join with me and the leadership team to make the Society's year be what you need and want it to be.

The Society weathered 2020 remarkably well. Our successes included: 1) going virtual on Zoom, 2) upgrading website, 3) publishing first newsletter, 4) creating Facebook page, 5) kicking off programming year with ice cream social, 6) adding four excellent webinars from Texas State Genealogical Society (TxSGS), 7) having great speakers at each of our three monthly meetings, 8) piloting two Members Helping Members (MHM) sessions, 9) hosting a fun and enlightening Holiday Show & Tell, 11) adding a number of new members to the leadership team, 12) gathering best practices from two sister societies, and 13) ending the year with 40 members! Despite a raging worldwide pandemic, we stayed focused on providing our membership with many new features to support your genealogy research goals while having a great time!

Hopefully, the New Year will not be as trying for you or for the Society as 2020 was. Highlights of upcoming events in 2021 include:

More programming than ever! This will include a workshop for those new to genealogy and those wanting a refresher, our very first SIG (DNA), more of the recorded webinars through our collaboration with the Texas State Genealogical Society (TxSGS), continuing our new Members Helping Members (MHM) sessions and four or five regular monthly presentations.

Some offerings continuing to be virtual. An example is our MHM.

Possibly expanding our in-person meetings to include a virtual option. This will depend on our continually increasing technology capabilities and the willingness of our wonderful and growing group of volunteers.

More members volunteering to expand what the leadership of the organization can accomplish. This will include a much needed updating of our bylaws and Articles of Incorporation and an expansion of our programming. I thank those of you who 'checked boxes' on your Membership Application form saying you would be interested in contributing to keep the Society strong and growing! If you have not heard from a leader asking how you would like to contribute, please reach out to me or anyone on the board.

Beginning the nominating process for electing members to the board earlier—in February. The plan is to select members for the Nominating Committee so their work produces candidates by late March. The goal of our selection process is to have multiple candidates for each open Board position. Currently, the open positions for 2021-2022 are Secretary, President, and a Director.

I invite you to actively participate in 2021 to make this 'your' genealogy society! You can do this by participating in program offerings, attending board meetings, sharing ideas for speakers, giving inputs on managing the organization, volunteering some time and, by responding when asked for input.

Stay tuned as we work to bring you more exciting adventures in finding your roots!

Jenny Sharrer, President

Contact me at [jennysharrer@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jennysharrer@sbcglobal.net)

## “Organizing Your Stuff” *cont’d from pg 1.*

I think a stand-alone genealogy program on your computer for keeping track of all your information is paramount. Several good ones are available and inexpensive: Legacy Family Tree, RootsMagic, Family Tree Maker, just to name a few.<sup>1</sup> If you keep all your information at a service online, you run the risk of items not being available should you stop paying for the service, have access removed, or changed later from free to paid. Fold3 (was Footnote) used to be completely free, but is now owned by Ancestry and only some documents are now free. I had in the past downloaded documents from FamilySearch that are now not available online. Simply downloading a copy while researching online and keeping it on your computer eliminates this problem.

Most people will have a combination of paper and digital files. In my opinion, almost **everything** needs to be scanned that is important in your family research. There are too many ways that all of your precious items can be destroyed. Hurricane, fire, earthquake, unknowing relative, the disaster list can be long. After reviewing each item, only you can decide if you want to keep the paper copy. Saving the digital copy takes very little physical space and can be retrieved at any time. The documents that can be easily found online (like census records) do not need to be kept as a paper copy unless you are currently using it for research. You will want to keep any document that was harder to acquire, obtained from a research trip you can’t duplicate, or non-online non-free resource. All original documents, of course, will need to be scanned, filed in archival quality material, and then the copies used in research. More information on archival products later in the paper.

### **FILING SYSTEMS**

It’s time to determine how you will organize your documents. There are several main overall schemes for organizing that have been devised. You want your chosen system to be long-lasting, simple, document-safe, and fairly inexpensive. You also want it to be expandable and easily understood by those who might inherit. I have chosen a binder-based system that I will review in the January 2021 meeting. Deciding on how you want to file your documents will ensure you purchase the correct archival products. Here, I will go through the actual process of preserving before filing, but you will have to keep your storage system in mind as you go.

I have found it best to first sort all of your documents by surname. If you have been given or inherited papers from an individual, keep these items together and in the original order as you process them because a note by itself may not make sense without the papers surrounding it. I have found that many groups of pictures are that way. Only one may be labeled and if you remove it from the set, the rest are then orphans and possibly unidentifiable.

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### SCANNING

To prepare your documents for filing and storage, you must scan them and save them to your computer. Scanning your items should not be complicated. Many printers have scanners attached, and files can be saved directly to your computer. A stand-alone scanner is relatively inexpensive and can be easier if scanning a lot of items. Another alternative will be your smart phone. Phones have very good photo and scan programs included now. You will need to devise a file naming system before you start scanning. It's easier to save items as you scan them than to go back and do it later. I find that "doing it later" could mean years, believe me, I know.

Storage can be inside your computer or an attached device, or both. Both is better. External drives are not expensive and can save you from a computer melt-down. You should **ALWAYS** have external backups of everything. An online backup system is also a great idea. There are several services that are reasonably priced. Carbonite and Backblaze<sup>2</sup> are two available for about \$6 per month. They have unlimited capacity and can also backup external drives at the same time. Having at least 3 backups of your data can save a lot of headaches. I have personally lost 4 computers in my time and all but the first had a complete backup system in place. Backup, Backup, Backup!

Scan at the highest quality that you can manage for your storage capacity. For images I scan at least 600 dpi. The best format for saving would be a TIFF or PNG file because they are not compressed, but a JPG (or JPEG) file at a high dpi rate is what I use. A PNG file can be as much as ten times larger than a JPG file so storage can become a problem. As long as you do not edit and re-save a JPG many times, it will not be further compressed. I scan most items as an image but documents can usually be saved as a PDF on most scanners. A PDF file will not take as much room on your computer generally as an image file, and free software is available to read the documents.<sup>3</sup>

### FILE NAMES

When saving your scans, you will have to have a naming system. Be consistent. Only use letters, numbers, underscores, or hyphens in your file names. Many of the other characters are used by computers for various commands. Most files will be saved in one of three ways: by surname, by date, or by location. The way you look at a document will help decide, some are obvious. If it is person-based like a vital document, the digital name will start with a surname. A census record is by year so it will start with a date. Many files names can be very long so I omit spaces and just capitalize each item which makes it easier to read. If you wish to add an underscore for a space, feel free to do so. I add Co for county because I have a lot of ancestors in Colorado. This is also the reason I put the state first. I sometimes add where I got the information.

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Here are some of my files:

By Surname:

*Surname-Firstname-EventYear-StateCounty-Source.ext* or  
*MaidenMarriedSurnames-Firstname-EventYear-StateCounty-Source.ext*

Smith-Jacob-CitizenshipPapers1807-PABucksCo.jpg

TartarBrown-Fannie-Death1875-VASmythCo.jpg

Ward-LelaMay-Headstone1917-COHugo.jpg

FlinnEbenezer-AlexanderPeggy-Marriage1800-NCCabarrusCo-BondIndex-FamSrch.pdf

By Date:

*YearStateOrCountryCountyCityDistricts-PageNumber-NameOfInterest.ext*

1880IACrawfordMilford65-10-North.jpg

1841EnglandYorkshireLevenLevenDist1-11-14-North.jpg

By Location:

*State-CountyPlace-EventIfAny-YearAuthorOrPublisher.ext*

Arkansas-HistoryOfCraigheadCounty-1964Goodspeed.pdf

Missouri-HistoryOfLewisClarkKnoxScotlandCos-1887.pdf

By looking at the name of my file, I can tell exactly the type of document. Your naming convention can be much easier by leaving off districts, page numbers, etc. Modify as you wish. As long as you name your files the same each time, all will be well. Other types of documents may need alternatives to these but should be similar in information listed. Again, be consistent. Make a cheat sheet that defines how your file naming works for each type of document so you can remember for future scanning, and others will also know your system.

Adding each document or photo to your genealogy program as you scan it before filing it away is a best practice, but you can put them in a surname based "Pending" folder while doing a major scan.

### **FILING YOUR DIGITAL FILES**

Now that you know how to name your files, you have to save them to your computer. You will need to establish an outline of folders that makes it easy to find your files. Establish your outline before you start scanning. The main folder will be labeled Genealogy, and every file you save will go into a sub-folder. The folder names will be basically the types of documents you will be scanning. My filing system is surname based, so my digital system is also. My filing system is shown in the box, with a good alternate in **blue**. Each subfolder can also be subdivided, for example, I have separate Military Records for Civil War, Revolutionary War, etc. The only folder I don't add under

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documents and therefore by surname is the census records. Many of my families overlap, so I subdivide only by year or country. It sounds complicated, but is a basic outline. Add alternate folders as you need them to accommodate your documents.

### ARCHIVAL STORAGE

Original items that you've collected should be kept in archival-safe products. The safest storage for paper documents is Mylar, but it can be expensive. Archival-safe sheet protectors, acid-free, PVC-free, and made of polypropylene, are easily available for documents and come in various sizes. These items are available at office supply stores, Amazon, etc. Avoid recycled products as they can include unwanted chemicals. The sheet protectors can come ready for 3-ring binders, or not, depending on how you expect to file your documents. By placing each page in a separate protector, you will be preserving it for the future. Thicker items can be scanned and put in one sheet protector and copies of individual pages used for research.

For more technical archival information, especially for larger items, I have found the book, *How to Archive Family Keepsakes* by Denise May Levenick,<sup>4</sup> is a valuable asset for both true archival information and determining what's important. Archival storage options for paper, as well as non-paper, can be found at archival sites like Gaylord Archival or Hollinger Metal Edge<sup>5</sup> among others.

These steps will help prepare your data for easy retrieval for research. Knowing what you have and where it is, helps tremendously. Remember that the system for filing that you choose should be as simple as possible, both for you to use and your heirs to decipher. There are many organizational ideas online<sup>6</sup> and I have picked the ones that seem to work best for me. The simpler the better and remember backup, backup, backup!

Genealogy  
 Census  
 1790  
 1800 etc....  
 Foreign etc....  
 Correspondence  
 Database Files  
 Documents (Or Surnames here with all subfolders under each Surname instead of Surnames under each document type)  
 Announcements  
 Surname1 (do this for each sub-see below)  
 Surname2 etc.  
 Birth-Baptismal Records  
 Johnson  
 Smith  
 Cemetery Records  
 Church Records  
 City Directories  
 Death Records  
 Letters  
 Family Histories  
 Immigration-Naturalization  
 Land-Locations  
 Letters  
 Local Histories  
 Maps  
 Marriage-Divorce Records  
 Military  
 Newspaper Items  
 Obituaries-Eulogies  
 Photos  
 School Files-Yearbooks  
 Voter Registrations  
 Wills-Probate-Estates  
 DNA  
 Downloads (items from others-I keep them separate)  
 Family Charts (Pedigree charts, family groups etc)  
 Forms-Organizing (all the blank forms you commonly use)  
 Gedcoms  
 Genealogy Societies  
 Heritage Societies  
 Webinars

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1. Example Genealogy Programs  
 Legacy Family Tree [www.legacyfamilytree.com/](http://www.legacyfamilytree.com/)  
 RootsMagic [www.rootsmagic.com](http://www.rootsmagic.com)  
 Family Tree Maker [www.mackiev.com](http://www.mackiev.com)
2. Example Backup Services  
 Carbonite [www.carbonite.com](http://www.carbonite.com)  
 Backblaze [www.backblaze.com](http://www.backblaze.com)
3. Free PDF Readers  
 Adobe Reader <https://acrobat.adobe.com/us/en/acrobat/pdf-reader.html>  
 Foxit reader <https://www.foxitsoftware.com/pdf-reader/>
4. Book - Levenick, Denise. How to Archive Family Keepsakes. Ohio: Family Tree Books, 2012.
5. Example Archival sites  
 Gaylord Archival [www.gaylord.com](http://www.gaylord.com)  
 Hollinger Metal Edge [www.hollingermetaledge.com](http://www.hollingermetaledge.com)
6. Family Tree Magazine [www.familytreemagazine.com](http://www.familytreemagazine.com)  
 Genealogy Gems Website, Lisa Louise Cooke <https://lisalouisecooke.com>  
 The Family Curator, Denise May Levenick <https://thefamilycurator.com/>  
 Sassy Jane Genealogy, Nancy Loe [www.sassyjanegenealogy.com](http://www.sassyjanegenealogy.com)



A variety of things to archive and preserve from the family of Linda Hudson.

## “We Dig Graves! Tips to Preserving Their Markers” By L Hudson ©

I have never met a genealogist who did not love a trip to a nearby cemetery. Even if we don't have relatives there, we pay respect to those who have gone before. We enjoy the stories told on the markers. We appreciate the art and symbols found on many stones. Cemeteries can be fascinating and humbling. You can go to a cemetery like Glenwood near downtown Houston and be fascinated by the style and opulence of the markers and by the histories of those buried there. You can go to a simple country cemetery and take note of the numerous deaths in a year due to a contagion or some historical event or ponder on the times in which they lived. We rejoice when we find a long-sought grave of an ancestor.

It is important to preserve cemeteries and the markers within. There are correct and incorrect ways to manage the care of markers. The topics I want to share concern the ways in which we primarily interact with cemetery headstones. The first is how best to read a marker that is worn and hard to read due to deterioration. The second is expert advice on how to clean markers.

According to Cemetery Conservators for United Standards (CCUS), there are several methods to use when trying to read cemetery stones so as not to cause harm by leaving agents that will speed the aging process potentially causing the materials to breakdown. Their website: <https://cemeteryconservatorsunitedstandards.org/> contains several options for reading the stones including using a flashlight to enhance the depth of the

inscription, taking a photo and using a computer photo program, like Photoshop, to create contrast, or using foil to create an impression. Preservationists say you should **never** use chalk, flour or shaving cream placed directly on the marker to read it. See photo below for a list of damaging choices.



[www.cemeteryconservatorsunitedstandards.org](http://www.cemeteryconservatorsunitedstandards.org)

What is the best advice for cleaning “**stone**” markers? Make sure you know what kind of stone you are working with. Some products work better on certain types of stone. Make sure the stone is not cracked or crumbling. If it is, visit the above-mentioned website for advice. With what appears to be an intact solid stone marker, the following is recommended. For minimal grime or biologic growth, soak the stone and use a soft nylon or horsehair brush in a circular motion to remove the material. Use water while working. If soft scrubbing and water does not do the job, then cleaning products may be needed. To remove moss, mold, mildew, or algae you want a bleach-free, biodegradable, non-acidic, non-phosphates cleaner. There are several on the market. You are looking for a product with the main ingredient of quaternary ammonium.

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Some market themselves specifically for headstones. CCUS reported that a study funded by the VA has led the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to implement policies that "encourage the use of gentle biocidal cleaners for the more than three million headstones nationwide." The study conducted by the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training in conjunction with the Harvard School of Engineering and Applied Sciences determined that a biocidal cleaner performed best. This study recommends D/2 Biological Solution, Enviro Klean<sup>®</sup>, BioWash<sup>®</sup> or other cleaners with quaternary ammonium compounds. See the cleaning section at CCUS for their list of approved cleaners. Products to absolutely not use include bleach, abrasives, household cleaners, Zep, Simple Green, Dawn and other similar products.

Another product is recommended that contains sodium lauryl sulfate, the same ingredient found in toothpaste. It too is biodegradable, non-ionic, and phosphate free. However, toothpaste has oils that will not degrade and may be harmful over time to markers. Don't use it. One product, Orvus, is frequently recommended for cleaning not only for headstones, but for vintage textiles, linens, and quilts to name a few.

Follow directions for the product you choose. Do your due diligence. The last thing you want is to harm a piece of your history or someone else's. "Do No Harm" is the mantra of conservationists and preservations. The gravestones should last for many generations. Careless treatment, even if it does not

immediately appear that our action is damaging, can greatly reduce the lifetime of a stone marker. It is amazing to learn what people have done to markers. Bleach, power tools, wire brushes, and power washers have all been used in well-meaning efforts to clean a tombstone. Only to cause irreparable harm. Be certain what type of stone (concrete, granite, marble, sandstone, etc) you are cleaning before you begin. Matter matters. Use the right tool (product) for the right job.

The marker pictures included were submitted by member Neal Scott. They include before and after pictures of markers he has personally cleaned, and one of him busy at work. Clearly, the right products can generate amazing results.

Finally, I am sure a few of us remember going to the annual cemetery cleaning. Those were more about cleaning the weeds, branches, etc. that had accumulated over the year and a big picnic for attendees for time to reminisce. I think those events are certainly in decline. If you need yard maintenance for a "country" cemetery, check with the local Sheriff's Department. Many will provide yard cleaning (mowing, edging) at little to no cost with non-violent inmate volunteers from their jail. Typically, they will mow and clean twice a year, but that is probably up to negotiation. Inmates are happy to get outdoors and it is a wonderful public service.

Also, be sure to check out <https://www.thc.texas.gov/preserve/projects-and-programs/cemetery-preservation> for conservation, preservation and laws related to cemeteries in Texas. You can

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also see what is happening across the state in cemetery preservation. View CHC Cemetery Projects Map.

If you have not joined us on Facebook, check us out on the HWFGS FB page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/HWFGS>. There you will find a recent post from the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training from the National Park Service entitled, "Gravestones Bite the Dust." Wishing you successful hunts and peace among the departed.



## Cont'd

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Personal photos courtesy of Neal Scott.

## “Why I do Genealogy” by Linda Hudson ©

Many of you may recall that as a child I spent countless hours looking through the 60 + years of diaries my granny kept. While those notes and newspaper clippings were intriguing to me, the hook into my genealogy world came in 1989. That Fall, I began dating my future spouse, Ken. During those conversations where you talked about who you were, what you wanted to be, etc., I shared that I went to TAMU, as did my two brothers. Ken then said that the only thing he knew about his biological dad was that he had gone to TAMU also and held a Master's and Doctorate Degree from there. He also knew his name was Silvio Navarro, not Newman. He had only two pictures of his Father that had been saved for him by his maternal grandmother. Back then, TAMU published former student directories, so I casually said, “let's look.” Indeed, Silvio Navarro had graduated with a Master's and a Doctorate in Electrical Engineering. The directory also indicated that he had died in 1967 and his last employment was for the University of Kentucky. Also, he had been living in Lexington, Kentucky.

Time went by. It was an unfortunate circumstance to tell this man, who I was getting to know, that his father was deceased. At that time, the internet was not what it is today. Googling his dad and learning more was not possible.

In August 1990, Ken and I married. In the summer of 1991, we moved to Tampa, Florida. Prior to the move, I had been accepted into the UH Social Work program, only to forgo attendance due to the move for his career. While getting acclimated to Tampa, I took classes at Tampa University and had applied to get into the program at USF. One day, in 1992, I was at the Tampa Main Library, and as I was exiting,

passed the rack of telephone books. You remember, those books of said locations that listed all the people who had a phone by name and address. There, sticking so far out that it was about to fall off the rack, was a 1991 Lexington, Kentucky phone book. Silvio died in 1967. He would not be in it. But I looked. Much to my surprise, there was one listing for a Silvio Navarro. How many Silvio Navarros would there be in Lexington, Kentucky? Certainly, this must be a relative. I wrote the address down and went home.

I drafted a letter to this Silvio. My husband and I sent it wondering what would happen. We had a new baby. Many thoughts ran through our heads about what this man could tell us about my husband's dad, and our daughter's grandfather, if anything. Much to our disappointment, the letter was returned with a forwarding address. Silvio had recently moved to New York.

I addressed a new envelope, put it in the mail and waited. Four days later the phone rang, and Silvio Navarro, Jr. said they had been looking for my husband all their lives. Wow!!

There are two important pieces to this story: what it meant to my husband and two, what it meant to the Navarro family. For my husband, he learned about his dad. He learned how brilliant he was and that he was a pioneer in the computer industry. Silvio Navarro, Sr. came to the U.S. from Cuba in 1948 to attend college. He received his Bachelor's Degree from UH. He then attended A&M.

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After receiving his graduate degrees, he taught at A&M and later became the first Department Head for Computer Science in the country at the University of Kentucky—Lexington. In 1954, he married Ana Maria, the daughter of the Venezuelan Consulate.

The two had wanted to raise Ken, but Ken's mother said no and moved to California, married, and changed Ken's last name. She was not going to be found in the days before computers even if it meant her son would have had far more opportunities. Every time a Navarro family member was in a new town, they always checked the phone book for Ken Navarro. But Ken Navarro did not exist. They looked for him. They wanted him as part of their family. Ken learned he was wanted. The Navarros would go on to have five sons and a daughter. The family was present the fateful day their dad died. He and other Department Chairs were to fly to Louisville for a university meeting. The original charter plane was delayed, so two smaller planes were chartered. Of the two planes chartered, one did not make it. We were told that improperly stowed luggage shifted and caused the plane to go down just beyond the end of the runway. Within minutes the plane was engulfed in flames. All of Ken's half-siblings were at the end of the runway waving dad goodbye.

Silvio the day he received his Doctorate at TAMU.



Ken learned he looked like his family, shared an interest and skill in computers, music, and love of the arts. It has been a remarkable road of engagement. He has met and developed relationships with his aunts, uncles and cousins, as well as siblings. Ken did not have the advantages his siblings had; in fact, he grew up in poverty, but he did well. There was an angel looking out for him. Gracefully, he has been made whole by these relationships and the perspective they give.

The Navarro family, most especially his dad's brothers-in law and sisters, embraced the opportunity to get to know Ken, to share family history, and of course, their abiding love for their brother with him. Now, they have Silvio's first son to love.

For the siblings, they have met the unknown and had many questions answered and have gathered on several occasions sharing life stories, especially stories of their dad. For Ken's stepmom, I think she too found a measure of closure knowing that she left the door open to Silvio's first son, whom he had longed for. She is such a wonderful person to have extended herself all these years later after Silvio's passing and her moving on with her life.

For all, this was just a lucky incident or providence. I believe that it was meant to be. For me, it became a catalyst to extend myself to help others find their connection to the past after personally experiencing this with Ken. Thankfully, I have had a fair measure of success for friends and family. Continued success has kept me on the hunt and it has been a wonderful journey. And it all began with a phone book.

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Only known photo of Silvio with Ken



Ken at age 1. His Stepmom had saved numerous baby photos.



Ken at first communion.



Brothers 1,3,4,5 L to R and Stepmom



Silvio not long before he died.



All the boys have similar features to their Dad.

Silvio about age 10.



## “Finding that Golden Gem” by Ron Ware ©

Herbert James was a 23-year-old private who served as an infantryman in the British Army's King's Shropshire Light Infantry. He was my wife's great uncle who was killed in August 1915 in the vicinity of Ypres, Belgium, and is buried in the British Army's memorial cemetery there.

Private James earned four service medals – the 1914 Star, the Allied Victory Medal, the British War Medal, and an unidentified medal - during the war. They were awarded posthumously and given to his sister who lived in the small Shropshire village of Quat. The sister eventually moved, and the medals were lost. Nearly one hundred years passed and nobody in the family even knew they ever existed.



Then one day in 2015, I received a message from an attorney who lives in Kidderminster, England. He told a story that, as a genealogist, made the hairs on the back of my neck stand. The attorney's father, who lived in Quat his entire life, had recently died, and upon preparing for an estate sale, the man explored a derelict shed on the property. There, hidden away in a box

were four military medals. An attached note read, "Private Herbert James, awarded posthumously 1918." The attorney is not a family relative but intrigued by the discovery of the nearly 100-year-old medals, he began a search for Private James's descendants. Eventually, he found the right Private James on my Ancestry.com tree and contacted me via their messaging system. Finding no other family connections, the attorney thought, that as the family historian, I should have the medals. Today they are displayed in a display case on a wall of my home in Houston.

This experience only reinforced my interest in genealogy and reminded me of the importance of posting ancestral information in cyberspace. If my family tree had not been visible in the virtual world, the man may never have found me, a keeper of the family history, and the medals could now be under some landfill. We never know where our genealogy paths will take us or who may find us with that golden gem!



Kings Shropshire Light Infantry 6th Btn. ca 1915

## "Autosomal DNA Testing Strategy" by Gail Colby ©

How do you get the biggest bang for your DNA buck and access as many genetic matches as possible? Several DNA sites accept DNA transfers at no cost. Of the major sites, only AncestryDNA and 23andMe do not accept transfers and require testing, see table 1. The most economical approach is to test at AncestryDNA, which has the largest pool of testers, and 23andMe, which is the other site that requires testing. 23andMe has the added feature of providing estimated mtDNA and Y-DNA haplogroups, as applicable, that you can use in your DNA research.

After you receive your AncestryDNA results, you can download the raw DNA and upload it to other DNA sites. My Heritage and FamilyTreeDNA have optional tools that you can unlock for a one-time fee. GEDmatch also costs nothing to upload your DNA and use many of the available tools. You can upgrade to Tier 1 and access more tools for \$10/month. The tool many people would like to see on AncestryDNA is a chromosome browser. As you become more adept and knowledgeable, you can begin to assign DNA segments to ancestral couples and see what DNA you and your matches received and share from your ancestors. FamilyTreeDNA, 23andMe, My Heritage, and GEDmatch have chromosome browsers and other tools to help you work with your DNA matches beyond the amount of shared DNA.

GEDmatch is a free site that accepts DNA uploads from most, if not all, DNA testing sites. You can see matches and compare DNA with people who have tested on other sites and take advantage of the wide array of tools.

A good tool to use is the "Are your parents related?" tool. This tool can help you identify potential endogamy (cousins marrying cousins) and pedigree collapse. Many genetic genealogists use this tool first when evaluating DNA to alert them to potential issues when looking at matches. These issues could include sharing too much DNA for a known relationship. GEDmatch gained unfortunate notoriety as a result of the Golden State Killer case where GEDmatch was used to help identify potential suspects based on DNA matches. You can opt-out of sharing your DNA with law enforcement. I am on GEDmatch and I opted -in to share with law enforcement. It is a personal choice.

Living DNA is associated with FindMyPast, and their initial focus was on Britain. They have broadened their regions across the globe and include twenty-one regions in Britain and Ireland. I have DNA from eighteen of these regions. My closest match on Living DNA and I share 41.05 cM. As more people test or transfer, the pool of matches will grow. Living DNA does not currently offer anything of genealogical interest beyond ancestry and matches.

People test their DNA for many different reasons. If your goal is to evaluate as many DNA matches as possible, "fishing in all the ponds" is the way to go. This is the strategy used by adoptees or people with unknown parentage. Maximize your DNA dollars by only testing at the autosomal testing sites that require testing and by uploading your DNA data from either AncestryDNA or 23andMe to the others. Table 1 provides a look at where you can test and where you can upload. It includes links to help you download and upload your DNA. Happy DNA hunting!

## "Autosomal DNA Testing Strategy" cont'd - Table 1

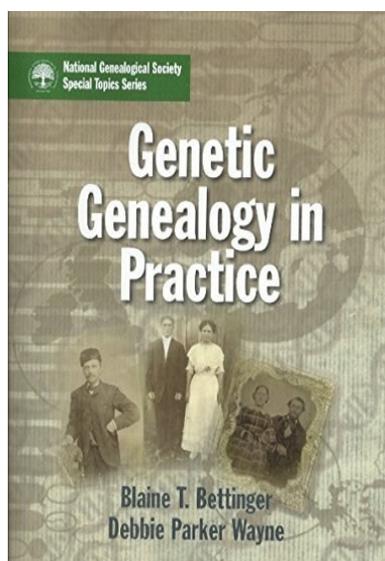
| Site              | URL   | Download | Upload | Accepts from            | Cost to upload | Extras                            | Download/Upload Instructions <sup>1</sup>   |
|-------------------|---|----------|--------|-------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| AncestryDNA (A)   | <a href="https://www.ancestry.com/">https://www.ancestry.com/</a>           | Yes      | No     | N/A                     | N/A            |                                   | <a href="https://support.ancestry.com/s/article/Downloading-AncestryDNA-Raw-Data">https://support.ancestry.com/s/article/Downloading-AncestryDNA-Raw-Data</a>   |
| FamilyTreeDNA (T) | <a href="https://www.familytreedna.com/">https://www.familytreedna.com/</a> | Yes      | Yes    | A, M, H <sup>2</sup>    | 0              | \$ 19 unlock tools (one time fee) | <a href="https://learn.familytreedna.com/imports/autosomal-transfer/family-tree-dna-family-finder-transfer-program/">https://learn.familytreedna.com/imports/autosomal-transfer/family-tree-dna-family-finder-transfer-program/</a> |
| 23 and Me (M)     | <a href="https://www.23andme.com/">https://www.23andme.com/</a>             | Yes      | No     | N/A                     | N/A            |                                   | <a href="https://customercare.23andme.com/hc/en-us/articles/212196868-Accessing-Your-Raw-Genetic-Data">https://customercare.23andme.com/hc/en-us/articles/212196868-Accessing-Your-Raw-Genetic-Data</a>                             |
| My Heritage (H)   | <a href="https://www.myheritage.com/">https://www.myheritage.com/</a>       | Yes      | Yes    | A, T, M, L <sup>3</sup> | 0              | \$29 unlock tools (one time fee)  | <a href="https://www.myheritage.com/help-center/en/dna/upload-dna-data">https://www.myheritage.com/help-center/en/dna/upload-dna-data</a>   |
| GEDmatch (G)      | <a href="https://www.gedmatch.com/">https://www.gedmatch.com/</a>           | No       | Yes    | All                     | 0              | \$10/month for Tier 1             | <a href="https://www.gedmatch.com/UploadHelp.php">https://www.gedmatch.com/UploadHelp.php</a>   |
| Living DNA (L)    | <a href="https://livingdna.com/">https://livingdna.com/</a>                 | Yes      | Yes    | A, T, M, H, and others  | 0              |                                   | <a href="https://livingdna.com/free-dna-upload">https://livingdna.com/free-dna-upload</a>   |

### Notes:

- 1 Download instructions for AncestryDNA and 23 and Me; others are upload instructions
- 2 Only the following can be uploaded: AncestryDNA V1 and V2; 23 and Me V3, V4, V5; My Heritage
- 3 Only Living DNA files generated before October 2018

## DNA Special Interest Group (SIG)

The first meeting of the DNA SIG will be virtual on Saturday, 16 January 2021 at 10:00 am. All members are welcome. The link will be sent to members after the first of the year. We will work our way through *Genetic Genealogy in Practice* by Blaine T. Bettinger and Debbie Parker Wayne.



The format of the SIG is an interactive workshop and learning environment. Our first meeting will be introductory. We will discuss our DNA testing status, i.e., who we have tested, what type of tests (autosomal, mtDNA, Y-DNA), where we have tested, and what we want to achieve with DNA testing.

It is okay to not answer all the questions, and "I don't know," is perfectly acceptable. The goal is to understand where we all are on our DNA journeys. Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions or thoughts. I look forward to seeing everyone interested in moving forward on their DNA and genealogy journey!

— Gail

## “See What You Missed! ” By Linda Hudson ©

If you were unable to attend our recent webinars, you missed some great information.

On October 29, 2020, Elizabeth O’Neal presented **“Using Digital Libraries: Search Strategies for Family Historians.”** What a timely presentation considering COVID-19 has us at home more than usual. Many libraries or other research facilities are closed, or hours are extremely limited. It is a great time to practice our online research skills, and the webinar had many great suggestions and research tips.

She demonstrated how to search the online collections of the FamilySearch Digital Library. Many, not all, can be viewed and downloaded to your home computer. In their digital library, all public texts (book, article or image) are available online, but are limited at various levels of access. If material is “protected,” you can see it at a local Family History Center (FHC). A “full permission” file allows you to read with agreed terms and you can download. “Limited” indicates you can read online, but you cannot download. Any file shown to be “member” means you must be an LDS member to access that information.

The FS Digital Library has more than 440,000 digitized works and sources of information. They are constantly adding more. As part of Family Search, materials are free just like their online research program. However, you will need to create a free account to sign in to view files.



[www.lisbdnet.com](http://www.lisbdnet.com)

Another site Elizabeth discussed was Genealogy Gophers. This site has more than 80,000 digitized family histories, regional and local histories, gazetteers, and other research resources to assist the family genealogist. Their site links to FamilySearch, The Internet Archive and other free book sources on the Internet. If you use this program, you are simultaneously searching these other sources with improved search technology. The research bonus in using this program is its ability to specifically identify people associated with dates and places. Genealogy Gophers allows you to see three books per week for free, or \$3.00 per month, or \$20.00 per year for unlimited access. Is there something you’re researching? Give them try and see if you strike gold.

Other websites were discussed with particular attention to Boolean values used on the different sites to enhance search capability. It was a great opportunity to be reminded of the many resources available online to increase research success.

## Spotlight Member:

### Neal Scott is HWFGS' New Director

Neal Scott is the Society's newly-appointed Director and fills the position that will expire in 2022.

Neal is a native Texan, born and raised in Corpus Christi, settling in Houston after graduating from Sam Houston State University in 1978. He moved to the Jersey Village area in 1984 after marrying his wife, Sally, and they have remained in the area after raising their two children.



Having retired from the electrical supply industry in 2017, he says he has finally found the time to devote to genealogy that he'd always wanted. He reports his roots go deep in US and Colonial times, having only one ancestor who came to America after the Declaration of Independence. His maternal roots go back through Kentucky to North Carolina and Virginia, and his paternal through Mississippi and South Carolina and all through the south. Eventually, all lines go back to the British Isles with Scotland, Ireland and England each well-represented. He's looking forward to travels there when he can, especially to Scotland.

Neal's passion is also visiting the graves of those in his family tree and doing what he can to clean and restore their markers. You'll find some before-and-after pictures of some of his efforts in a separate article in this newsletter.

Ancestry and Find-a-Grave are among his favorite sites, and, as a Mac user, Reunion is his choice for recording all he discovers.

In addition to his Director position, Neal is also chairing the committee to update our by-laws and is active helping Ron Ware with the new website. He created and maintained websites in the past for all his kids' activities, including Scout troop, JVHS Project Proms, soccer teams and others.

## Zoom with US!!

Zooming is Easy. It takes a few simple steps.

1. Sign up at [zoom.us/signup](https://zoom.us/signup) by entering your email address.
2. You will get an email from them to **activate your account**.
3. When we send out an invite for a virtual meeting, **REGISTER** — it just takes your name and email.
4. You will receive a link to the meeting via Zoom. When it is time to meet, click on the link and then "Join Meeting or Webinar."
5. You will be able to see the meeting and hear it if your audio is on. You don't need to have your computer camera on to share your picture.

## “Upcoming & Free: RootsTech Connect Feb 25-27, 2021”

RootsTech 2021 will be a three day event provided by FamilySearch whose goal is to help people discover their family histories and make connections with their ancestors.

This year is **DIFFERENT!** How is it different you ask? The three day conference is **FREE.**

Presentations are encouraged to follow a shorter format (10-30 minutes) because the conference is **VIRTUAL.** What this means for many of us — is we may actually be able to fit presentations into a busy day working, homeschooling, etc. Currently over

130,000 people from around the globe have registered. This past February, Keynote Speakers included David H. Kennerly and Emmitt Smith. Topics included: “Preserving the Fabric of Our Families,” “Tackling Difficult Chapters of our Family History,” “Adding Branches

To Your Family Tree Using DNA” and many more.

You stand to lose nothing and may gain important information to re-searching and preserving your family history.

Register at [www.rootstech.org](http://www.rootstech.org)

## “DNA Testing for Ancestry Anniversary!”

Did you know that this year is the 20th anniversary of DNA testing for ancestry purposes? FamilyTreeDNA, located here in Houston, founder Bennett Greenspan began what has become a cornerstone

in ancestral research today.

Due to widespread testing, adoptee’s can find their biological family, extended birth family can be found with answers to family history questions,

and family secrets are revealed for some. Even health risks can be revealed. See the full article at <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-lost-family/202012/extraordinary-year-milestones-in-dna-testing>

## Editor’s Corner by Linda Hudson

**Happy Holidays and New Year to Everyone!!** Here’s to hoping that the health of our country and world is better in 2021. If you were touched by the loss of someone dear,

know that our collective prayers are being sent your way.

We know it will be awhile before things are back to normal. Hopefully, by next Fall, we will

be able to meet in person. My hope for the Spring is that all remain healthy and that you are able to join us virtually.

All my best,  
Linda



## Houston West Family Genealogy Society

The Only Genealogy Society in West Houston

[www.houstonwestfamgen.org](http://www.houstonwestfamgen.org)

### 2020-2021 Sept-May Calendar of Events

Everyone researching for ancestors...*Novice to Expert*...is invited to participate virtually until further notice!

| 2020  | 2021  |
|---|---|
| <p><b>August</b></p> <p>6 1-3 PM Kick-off &amp; Virtual Ice Cream Social</p> <p>13 1-3 PM HWFGS Board Meeting</p> <p>17 HWFGS Membership Applications sent</p> <p><b>September</b></p> <p>2-5 Federation of Genealogical Societies Conference<br/>The conference will be virtual—<a href="http://www.fgs.org">www.fgs.org</a></p> <p>10 12:30 PM Gail Colby - "DNA Results!? Now What?!"</p> <p>23 10 AM-12 Noon HWFGS Board Meeting</p> <p><b>October</b></p> <p>6 10 AM HWFGS Board Meeting</p> <p>8 12:30 PM Caroline Pointer – "10 Tech Tools to Help You Collaborate with Family for Your Research"</p> <p>29 12:30 PM Elizabeth O'Neal—"Using Digital Libraries: Search Strategies for Family Historians"</p> <p><b>November</b></p> <p>1 <i>Daylight Savings Time Ends - Fall Back!</i></p> <p>10 10 AM HWFGS Board Meeting</p> <p>12 12:30 PM "Maximizing Your Use of FamilySearch.org"</p> <p>13-15 TSGS 2020 Family History Conference - Irving, TX - <a href="http://www.txsgs.org">www.txsgs.org</a> (virtual)</p> <p>28 10 AM <b>Members Helping Members</b></p> <p><b>December</b></p> <p>10 12:30 PM Holiday Party &amp; Members' "Show &amp; Tell"</p> <p>12 10 AM <b>Members Helping Members</b></p> | <p><b>January</b></p> <p>7 4 PM <b>Members Helping Members</b></p> <p>12 10 AM HWFGS Board Meeting</p> <p>14 12:30 PM <b>Jeanie Smith - "Organizing and Preserving Your Stuff"</b></p> <p>16 10:00 AM <b>DNA Special Interest Group (SIG)</b></p> <p>23 9:00 AM <b>Members Helping Members</b></p> <p><b>February</b></p> <p>9 10 AM HWFGS Board Meeting</p> <p>11 12:30 <b>Susan Kaufman - "Researching Our Ancestors in Libraries, Archives &amp; Repositories"</b></p> <p>25-27 <b>RootsTech Connect FREE</b><br/><a href="mailto:info@rootstech.org">info@rootstech.org</a> (virtual)</p> <p><b>March</b></p> <p>9 10 AM HWFGS Board Meeting</p> <p>11 12:30 PM "Maximizing Your Use of Ancestry.com"</p> <p>14 <i>Daylight Savings - Spring Forward!</i></p> <p><b>April</b></p> <p>6 10 AM HWFGS Board Meeting</p> <p>8 12:30 PM <b>Cari Taplin – "How Did You Find That? Knocking Down Brick Walls"</b></p> <p><b>May</b></p> <p>11 10 AM HWFGS Board Meeting</p> <p>13 12:30 PM "Two Approaches for Recording Your Finds: 1) Writing as You Go and 2) Family Book Creator"<br/>2021-2022 Board Elections</p> <p>20-23 <b>National Genealogical Society 2021 Family History Conference – Salt Lake City, UT</b><br/><a href="https://www.ngsgenealogy.org/">https://www.ngsgenealogy.org/</a></p> <p>June, July &amp; August - We are off for the summer</p> |

## Good to Know! Beginner Tips!

Start with your **research goals**. What do you want to learn first? What do you know? **Make a list of names, relationships, locations and dates**. Whatever you know. **Ask family** members questions. Do a little research about researching family history. What kind of documents can you search for? What are the best sources? U.S. Census data is only available through 1940 currently. 1950 will be available in April 2022.

Invest some time looking and asking about the various research and tree building sources. Choose one that fits your budget and skill set. Before your research gets too far along, **create a naming file system**. A mistake made by many is a haphazard filing system that has to be cleaned up later on.

### BOARD:

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### Website & Virtually:

www.houstonfamgen.org

*Houston  
West FGS  
Currently  
Meeting  
Virtually*

## MORE TO KNOW

For other events

### Update on GRIP

If you are not familiar, "GRIP" is a favorite institute among genealogists looking to learn more. GRIP holds summer programs in Pennsylvania. They will decide by the end of January if they will meet in person or virtually. Meanwhile, GRIP has posted the courses they intend to offer in **Summer 2021**.

Check them out:

<https://www.gripitt.org/>

Genealogical Research Institute of  
Pittsburgh

### Quaker Research Virtual Conference

<https://www.isbgfh.com/QUAKER-VIRTUAL-INSTITUTE>

If you are of Irish and/or British descent, you may descend from Quakers. The Quakers kept fabulous records dating back to the late 1600s. The conference covers history and records. See the website for details and cost. Members receive a discount.

Dates: **15 & 16 March 2021**

10:00 am—5:00 pm Eastern time